



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Heroin Task Force Briefing

- **Background**

- Howard County has seen a steady increase in heroin use and overdoses among predominately Caucasian 18-30 year old males and females from all socioeconomic backgrounds
- Reasons for Present Rise:
 - Recent crackdown on prescription opioids has driven the costs of these medicines to much higher levels
 - This has lead people to seek cheaper and cleaner heroin to fill their opioid addictions, particularly from Baltimore City
- Recent rise in Howard County:
 - **Heroin-related deaths have increased** in recent years from 5 in 2013 to 8 in 2014, and presently in 2015, we have already seen 7 people die
 - There were 18 **non-fatal heroin** overdoses in 2014, and already in 2015 we have had 14
 - **Heroin-related arrests have gone down** recently from 216 in 2013 to 149 in 2014, and 13 so far in 2015
 - *This decline is primarily due to new legislation that has *granted immunity* to those that call in an overdose, as long as the illegal substances were obtained in the process of seeking, providing, or assisting treatment

- **Howard County Police Department**

- Our police force has been **working actively** with the surrounding jurisdictions and other branches of government (DEA, FBI, Homeland Security, the U.S. Attorney's Office, Maryland State Police, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, Frederick County, Carroll County, Loudon County VA, West Virginia State Police, and Northwestern VA Heroin Task Force)
 - These relationships have proved to be a tremendous asset in disseminating real-time information
 - The Department is presently trying to formalize this relationship into a Task Force
- **Route 70 has been nicknamed the "Heroin Highway"** as people from the west, especially West Virginia, have utilized this route to go in to Baltimore City to purchase their heroin

- While you can purchase heroin anywhere in the state, Baltimore City offers the cheapest and cleanest amount, so that purchasers can re-sell unused heroin to replenish costs
 - Exits off of Route 70 have proved to be an easy area for the Police to arrest heroin users
- Around 250 field officers will have Narcan (nasal) on their belts to be prepared to resuscitate those who overdose on heroin
 - Received Narcan through state grant
- New County policy (Feb 2014): Vice and Narcotics Detectives are called on the scene of suspected heroin overdoses so that they can inspect the scene first-hand

- **Department of Corrections**

- Currently administers two different heroin treatment programs, and is planning on introducing a third in July 2015
 - First training program teaches inmates that have suffered from opioid addictions in the past on how to handle an overdose
 - As part of their training, they receive a prescription of Narcan at no cost
 - Second training program is for family members of those that have suffered opioid addictions in the past
 - Training includes noticing and reacting to warning signs
 - Receive a prescription of Narcan at no cost
 - The third program is intended to cure the addictive tendencies suffered by inmates with opioid addiction through Vivatrol
 - Overall Steps of Program
 - Identify Opioid Addicts
 - Go through treatment at center
 - Receive overdose training
 - Volunteer for the Vivatrol Program
 - Inmate receives one injection per month for 6 months
 - Typically cures addiction in 6 months
 - This program is being started with the help of a GOCCP grant; should receive some of the grant by June 1
 - The contractor that Corrections uses for medical purposes will do the additional injections/blood work gratis, so County will only have to pay to get the drug
 - State reimburses drug costs for inmates through Medicaid

- **Health Department**

- Currently has two members within Corrections that assist in opioid cases
- Since FY15, the Health Department has trained 199 people to handle Narcan (Nasal) for a 2-year certification
- Actively working with other departments **to increase awareness, prevention, and treatment**
 - Dr. Rossman and Dr. Bonaccorsy have been exceptional in developing these programs

- **Mental Health**

- Mental health and drug abuse are closely correlated as indicated by the State's recent merger of its Mental Hygiene Administration and Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration to form a new department called the Behavioral Health Administration.
- Howard County officials view drug addiction as a behavioral health condition as well that impacts its schools, communities, health care organizations, court system, and law enforcement agencies
- According to data published in SAMHSA's *2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, adults with mental illness use illicit substances **at a higher rate** than adults without a mental illness
- Howard County's police department is staffed with a full-time mental health mobile crisis worker to assist with individuals in distress when police arrive at a scene
 - There are instances when the distressed individual is intoxicated or addicted to intoxicants, and the mobile crisis worker is equipped to treat the individual appropriately, which enables the police department to complete its investigation
- We just announced funding of a new joint initiative with Howard County General Hospital and the Horizon Foundation to provide urgent care to individuals in crisis
 - The initiative will connect individuals, some of whom may be in crisis due to chronic addiction or overdose, to outpatient crisis stabilization services (including drug treatment) **within 24-48 hours** of the individual seeking care
 - This will also update the provider directory for individuals in crisis so that information regarding treatment centers, outpatient providers, etc. is current and accessible through multiple electronic devices

- **Needs/Problems in Howard County**

- Continue and strengthen a multi-discipline approach to tackle this problem, with the Health Department at the lead
- Need to increase public awareness; **this is a real problem**
 - Work with HCPSS to develop a program to discourage use
 - Police have been working on a program recently
- Beyond stiffer penalties we need stronger rehabilitation and treatment programs
- By allowing immunity for calling 911, we have now removed Court-mandated treatment from the equation -**Unintended Consequence**
- Current insurance structure is inadequate to most in receiving treatment

- Some providers don't accept types of private insurance used, deductibles are too high, etc.
- Need a more diverse treatment provider pool that serves the needs of those with opioid addictions